

IS THIS "THE WASTED GENERATION"? STIRS DENIALS

Novelists, Educators and Employers Find No Grounds for the Indictment of the Youth Beginning Its Life Career; Protest That Such a Charge Is Mere Pessimism

IS the present generation wasted so far as carrying civilization on a little further, which, as political economists have agreed, was always the result of every generation. Owen Johnson, a novelist, in his latest fiction declared in the affirmative and *The Sunday Herald* gave his arguments to the world. It has since taken the opinions of other novelists, educators and managers of great business on the subject, and some of these it presents herewith. In the main they take issue with the opening pessimistic view.

Our young man and woman graduates of high schools and colleges of the present year start on the career they have chosen with hope and confidence and, as the writers who follow say, with intellect even more acute than their fathers displayed, while the qualities of ambition and determination are already apparent. Summing up a symposium of criticism it would happily seem that the term "wasted" does not fit the present new generation.

By TORREY FORD.

FOLLOWING along with the "wasted generation" idea, a nickname applied fondly by Owen Johnson to the rising young sons who refuse to rise, reveals several other writers who are not so willing to fall in with Mr. Johnson's mood concerning current society. There are those who hesitate to go on record as believing that the world is headed for the "bow-wows." There are even those who persist in the optimistic belief that the world is doing very nicely, all things considered.

In an interview granted to *The New York Herald* recently Mr. Johnson charged that the sons of successful men in America were failing to take advantage of their opportunities in not assuming their responsibilities. He said that the old American strain was gradually losing its heritage and yielding before another that had not been long in this country.

Mr. Johnson has made this waste of a generation the theme of his latest novel, "The Wasted Generation." He feels that the colleges are partly to blame in failing to inspire men to leadership, and that a characteristic lack of family solidarity in American life is a contributory cause. At any rate, he feels that we are facing a tremendous problem to-day, one that should almost arouse the instinct of self-preservation.

Several Have Other Views And Express Them Freely

On the other hand, Rex Beach, popular author and playwright, takes a more cheerful view of affairs. He believes that things are running along rather smoothly, strictly according to specifications and nature.

Alexander Black, author of "The Great Desire" and "The Seventh Angel," blends his criticism with a sympathetic appreciation that most of the "giants" have lived in the past.

"It is needless to indicate," said Mr. Black in the *September Century*, "that art has not always been dying, but that in each season it has just died, leaving a gray waste behind it."

Dr. David Orr Edson, physician and psychoanalyst, author of "Getting What We Want," finds himself too busy conforming with psychological phenomena to rebel against present conditions. He confesses that his mind is more investigative than rebellious. He prefers to utilize facts rather than to protest against them.

Although the returns could hardly be called complete as yet it begins to appear as if Owen Johnson had submitted a minority report, at least as far as circles strictly literary are concerned.

"When a man generalizes on any subject he lays himself open to contradiction," said Rex Beach, when routed out of the study of his hilltop home at Ardley and invited to comment on the generation that is "wasting" its opportunities.

"For every son of a successful man who has failed to carry on you could probably cite another son who has carried on splendidly, in some instances surpassing the father's achievements. Take John D. Rockefeller, Jr. He is carrying on not only the commercial activities of his father but also the moral and philanthropic work. Look at young Morgan.

"They don't get the same amount of publicity that their fathers did. Their accomplishments are not considered so remarkable. They aren't in the spotlight. We are blinded by the spotlight that has been turned on their fathers.

"I believe that if you went through the

list of strong and influential men in the country you would find a large percentage of sons of self-made men who would have made a success even without the advantages which their fathers have offered them. And the percentage of failures—the useless, discarded ones—would be no greater than you would find in the poorer classes.

"On the whole, my experience has been that the sons of successful men are a better balanced lot of young men, more intelligent and more susceptible to useful impulses.

"But if that weren't the case I'm not so sure it would be unfortunate for society. If the sons of influential men carried on continually gradually there would be developed a race of supermen, of super-intellects, who would dominate the rest of us.

"Granting that the self-made man is the strength of America, as Owen Johnson suggests, I see no reason why he shouldn't continue to be the strength of America. And if his son doesn't live up to his opportunities I should call it a splendid provision of Nature, making room at the top for other self-made men to come up and lead the nation.

"Take the example of the forest. If the big trees didn't die out and make room for the younger trees to grow up and spread their branches it wouldn't be a very healthy forest. Growth, development, death—that is the law of Nature. Otherwise we would have a forest of one kind of timber.

"As for the demoralizing influence of wealth, of financial and social prestige, I think that it can be counteracted more by home influence than by anything else. The tree is inclined the way the twig is bent. And parents in wealthier families have just as much influence over their children as parents in poorer circumstances. In all classes and at all times we have the rebellious youth.

"As a matter of fact, the scarcity of self-made men to-day may be accounted for chiefly because it is much more difficult to make a conspicuous success than it was a generation ago. At that time industry was in a state of development and there were multitudes of opportunities. A man couldn't go out to-day and repeat the success of John D. Rockefeller. Conditions aren't propitious for it. A young man to-day with the same abilities and the same handicaps couldn't be expected to advance as rapidly as he would have advanced a generation ago."

Thinks Colleges Are Better Than They Ever Have Been

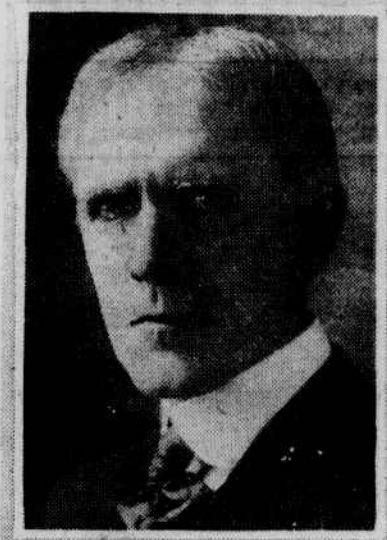
In response to a query as to whether American universities were falling down in their duty to the nation, as to whether they failed to inspire men to leadership, Mr. Beach was firm in his convictions.

"I believe the colleges are better to-day than they have ever been," he said. "They offer more advantages to the student than they have ever offered before. They have better instructors and a better system of instruction. If the student doesn't profit by these advantages it is due to him and not to the college."

With the young womanhood of America, the much maligned young lady who has forgotten what a dishpan looks like and knows a kitchen only from hearsay information, Mr. Beach is also ready to deal leniently.

"It's a damn good thing that women have gotten out of the habit of sitting around sewing and baking biscuits," he

Alexander Black, whose views on "The Wasted Generation," by Owen Johnson, are illuminating.



declared with enthusiasm. "It was a waste of time."

"Why should a girl know anything about domestic duties other than managing a household? There is no great mystery about running a house. When she has to go into the kitchen and cook, when she has to make beds, she can pick it up quickly enough. Otherwise it is far better that she should devote herself to more useful occupations.

Women of to-day have a far greater comprehension of politics than they had a generation ago. They may not be qualified yet to enter into an active political life, but they are getting there rapidly enough. They're on the way.

"When you go to generalizing about the progress of society," the author concluded, "it all depends on the angle from which you view the picture. Watching the same scene from varying positions, you can get totally different results. Possibly that is why my views do not coincide with Mr. Johnson's."

Alexander Black is more ready to conform with Owen Johnson, although he tempers his judgment with a genial sense of humor.

"The views of Mr. Johnson as reflected in *The Sunday Herald* interested me deeply," said Mr. Black. "Each generation needs its jolt, and if Mr. Johnson in his book induces the smug American to look himself over he will have done a good thing."

"The 100 per cent, stodgy are vastly in need of illumination. People who think that mere Americanism is going to float them are likely to be sharply awakened. Being a bigoted American isn't a good American. A man sized citizenship doesn't strut about with a label on its chest like a country store manager."

Americanism Never Complete

In Alexander Black's opinion "Americanism will never be finished. It has only begun. The American who doesn't want any more changes is the kind of American who keeps the schools, from kindergarten to university, as they are. The university teacher who tries to meet the new day is called a 'dangerous radical.'"

"I think Mr. Johnson is quite right in saying that the children of the successfully rich do not carry forward as they should. The people who are best at carrying are those who have had to hustle to get something to carry. But I do not agree that this is a new appearance. The world has always been that way. Each generation thinks that it has invented backsliding. "Plato spoke reverently of the 'ancients.' From the beginning people have thought that there were giants in those days—the days far enough back. Snowstorms were deep when measured on boy legs, and corn cakes were wonderful to young stomachs. "Wealth is seldom well handled by those who haven't earned it. The father hustles, with the prospective fun of spending. The son, true to form, having the wherewithal in hand, starts after the good time at once. Great families are not built up that way. Neither are great nations. The United States, with a huge inheritance, often seems to be acting like a spoiled boy. That progress has to be earned seldom appears to be considered by the inheritors of a rich past."

"If hustle could be inherited, if we could transmit wisdom, perhaps we should have a lot of supermen and a lopsided world. Maybe this is Nature's way of keeping the balance. Each of us has to grow his own wisdom, such as it may turn out to be. Big men don't drop off family trees ready built. They grow up out of the soil.

"This is one of the reasons why I'm not afraid of foreigners. We're all imported. The Pilgrim Fathers were foreigners to a man. The men who managed to get this country started were all foreigners or the sons of foreigners. If immigrants once represented the pluck to get out of one place and start over in another, I can't see why the same quality shouldn't be recognized to-day. At precisely what hour did the foreigner stop being new blood and begin to be 'scum'?"

"The club called the United States may be right in limiting its membership and having a waiting list. But I object to insulting the new members. I don't believe Mr. Johnson has any such idea. He uses his argument about foreign born in the hope of injecting a little energy into any complacent older members who may

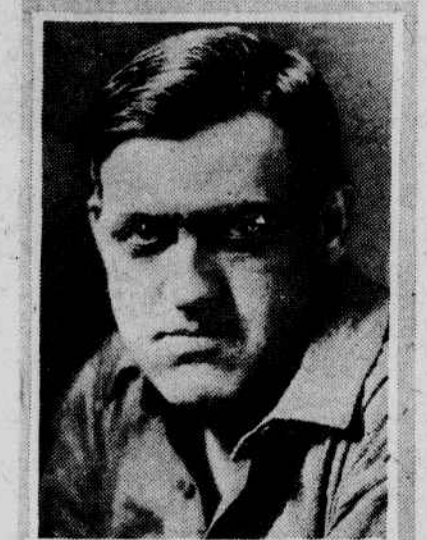
think they can live on an antecedent investment of courage and character."

"As for new generations—well, they have always been disappointing, but chiefly because they have been different. Difference is usually translated somewhere as degeneracy. Our great-grandfathers were accused of illustrating degeneration. I've said something about this sort of logic in the *September Century*. Some one will say it better."

"The new generation always needs to be spanked—and I'm glad Mr. Johnson has done it—but spanked generations will keep on growing up."

"Home life is different because homes are. People are more important than the houses they live in. A flat with daughter out working can't be like a vine grown cottage with daughter sewing a sampler. But this new kind may be a mighty fine daughter at that. I've seen it proved. Of course, if she paints her lips she will only get the kind of man that likes painted lips. Each generation has its quota of damfoolishness. After all, no girl can

Rex Beach, novelist, who disagrees with Owen Johnson about this generation being wasted.



hurt herself so much by daubing her face with colored dirt as her great-grandmother hurt herself with eighteen inch corsets. Considering how our great-grandmother behaved, there really shouldn't be any race here at all. Fortunately few fashions are fatal.

"Mr. Johnson's strictures as to the unpreparedness of young girls are impregnable. Superficial phases may be passed over, but we cannot lightly consider the failure to prepare for fundamental, for undebatable obligations.

"Traditional homes may not be imperative. Even traditional marriage may not be imperative. But a society that forgets babies will soon be out of the game. If having babies is to be left to 'foreigners,' to foreigners must go the inheritance. The world belongs to those who take hold of it and who help populate it.

"Lipstick ethics may be against me. Yet if we can't have a census we can't have a history. Despite the gorgeous dream of Mr. Shaw there is no present promise that babies will be born without mothers."

How the Psycho-Analyst Considers the Main Facts

"Of course babies are old fashioned. But so is the North Star."

When the psychoanalyst greets the problem of the wasting generation he gives no thought to protesting against conditions as they are. He accepts them as facts, and promptly uses them in his business.

"These are tremendous facts which Mr. Owen Johnson has presented," said Dr. David Orr Edson. "They make a splendid array of tabulated statistics. But what business have we protesting against axioms? We should be utilizing them, putting them together for some use, instead of standing static and saying: 'Ain't it terrible!'"

"Furthermore, although Mr. Johnson has some wonderful stuff, I do not believe that he is interested in sifting out the truth. He is merely angry at the results. He is reporting in relation to his prejudices, judging the country according to his own standards. While he is splendid in facts, his conclusions give the psychologist access to his stabilized idea of perfection."

"I see too waste in the sons of successful men failing to carry on. I merely set it down that they have the disease of looking for pleasurable excitement. They make room for others to come up instead of sitting back and saying: 'We've got it and we're going to keep it.'"

"In a college the seniors have no business saying: 'Oh, kick out those freshmen.' This is a great country for development where the furnace stoker can become an Andrew Carnegie. Mr. Johnson has his formulas already cast. The world, he do move, and Mr. Johnson wishes to stabilize it as it is to-day. He will have his difficulties."

"People are always complaining about the politician, cussing him out for his inefficiency. They haven't the vision to see that politics—even bad politics—forms an essential feature in herd organization. I have a fine feeling of admiration for crowd inefficiency. When the politician pays \$4 a day to the man for 50 cents' worth of work I watch the proceeding rather gratefully. I am very thankful that the 50 cent man will accept his \$4 and go along on his way without bothering the rest of us."

"Some reformers would throw the 50 cent man out into a vacuum. But still he'd be here organically, the same fourteenth century animal. If you didn't have the government to take up this problem we'd be overwhelmed by the 50 cent man and gradually we would go to pieces."

"I look at these things from an investi-

gative point of view. I am neither rebellious against them nor enthusiastic over them. To a correlated way of thinking, these are labels that are worthy of measurement, not of prejudice."

"Basically a man has two appetites: his body appetite, where he has to have a balanced ration, and an appetite to achieve, to his own satisfaction. The feeding of the psychic self with achievement has got to be done. Mr. Owen Johnson is being great by calling attention to the world of a developing inferiority, but an inferiority according to his own standards."

And then to cap the climax of this far-fetched controversy we have young Theodore Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, declaring that the peacetime slacker is as grave a menace to America to-day as was the service slacker during the war.

"The man who sits back now content with the laurels he has won or that others have won for him is a slacker," Mr. Roosevelt is quoted in opening the third convention of the American Legion at Asbury Park.

"Every American citizen should be in close touch with the affairs of his country. America is like a great partnership, and as partners we should work in unison without class distinction as we did in the days of the war. The future of America lies in its children, and to make them good citizens good schools are essential."

"I have never seen any reason to agree with the man of a past generation who thinks that the boys of to-day are not equal in mental and physical points to their fathers and grandfathers. Thousands of the younger generation come under my immediate notice every school year, and I feel justified in saying that, far from being

Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., who recently called attention to the "peacetime slackers" of society.



wasters and unable to 'carry on' after their fathers, they are better."

This is the way C. B. Fowler, assistant secretary of the New York University's School of Commerce and Finance in Washington Square, speaks of the generation of young men who are about ready to begin their work in the business world. As he has seen and taken stock of 5,000 who have enrolled this year, and as he has had excellent reports of their immediate predecessors—the recent graduates of the school—he feels that in justice he must speak in the highest praise of the young men of the day.

More Than 100,000 Youths Have Taken the Courses

"Our pupils come from all over the world. San Francisco sends us many, and Western colleges, like the Northwestern University, send us yearly their graduates who want a business course. At least 100,000 young men have passed through this school since it was organized in 1900, and one-tenth of this number have borne off the degree this school offers—B. C. S. Mainly these have specialized in accounting, economics, social and public finance, while others have satisfactorily completed courses in business management, advertising, marketing, &c. All our students are thoroughly grounded in business English."

The regular day scholars are expected to graduate in three years, and the regular night pupils finish the same course in four years; the latter are employed during the day. We have a staff of 190 teachers.

"Of the New York young men who enter from high school or college and who go

into business in this city the School of Commerce and Finance is able to keep track to a certain degree. Reports of their energy and consequent success are general. The great majority do well; they are, in fact, noted for their business proficiency. They get good jobs and stand high in the business world."

"It would be a mistake to regard the output of this school as 'wasters.' They are more alert than their fathers were; they have more wants, to be sure, but they go out to succeed, and thus they are enabled to supply these additional wants due to new social needs."

With a force of 6,000 clerks and applications every spring and fall of twice as many wouldbe clerks, Vice-President W. F. Dobbins of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, who is in charge of the personnel department, has a good opportunity to feel the pulse of the new generation. In answer to the main question whether he had found in this generation decadent tendencies which would warrant calling it a waster and unequal to preceding generations this official said:

"Human nature does not change to such an extent even in changing times and altering social conditions. The boys who come to us now out of high schools and colleges measure up to what their predecessors were in intellect, adaptability and application. Sometimes I think the modern boy is superior to his father at the same age. He has to be pretty quick to apprehend and understand, because things go faster in this age than they did in his father's and grandfather's time."

Difference in Amusement Costs, But Does Not Blame Them

"In matters of amusement there has been a great change, but the present generation is not entirely to blame for that. It does spend more money in entertaining itself than it can afford. In my young days we were able to do with simple pleasures. They don't exist to-day, and youth if it has what it calls a 'good time' has to pay for its fun in real money and quite a lot of it. The clerks don't begrudge the money and in that sense and comparatively they might be called wasters."

"We offer exceptional advantages here, which accounts for the multitude of applications for employment; we provide luncheon at no cost to clerks and we look after their health, even sending those who are really sick up to the sanitarium this institution conducts at Mount McGregor. For these and other reasons perhaps we get the cream of youth trying after graduation to place itself in business."

"Among our people the old rules prevail, following those of human nature—we have the clerks who do what they have to do and no more, we have clerks who don't do even that much and we have a few who do 'the other fellow's work and their own too.' In earnestness and application there are varying degrees, but I remember that this has been true always."

"It must be remembered that the younger generation gets into business several years later than the fathers did. It has not yet been possible to put into effect the continuation system of education whereby high school boys will be obliged to keep up their studies, but this system is already working with the graduates of the public schools. We are keen to get hold of the better educated and the high school and college graduates have the best chance of employment here; the public school product is not, I regret to say, very high in quality, but I believe it is improving."

"Now if we compare the best we have in the way of clerks just beginning a business career with the best we used to have when their fathers started, it is my opinion that the new generation brings in equally good quality."

"There are modern conditions, however, which weigh against them and hold them back from becoming householders and fathers of families, but they can't control such conditions. They are endeavoring to meet these by means of a double salary. That is, when a man and woman who have both been wage earners marry the wife does not give up her position, but keeps on working and permits the home—if they start one—to look after itself. The advent of a child changes this, but unless things ease up a bit there will be fewer such adventures."

"But that is another and vital theme. It is worthy of considerable thought because of its effect on future generations. We will be content to talk of the existing generation, which, I repeat, is as ambitious and as clever as any preceding generation ever was."

Two Unusual Facts of Modern Science

THE nature of quicksand and the methods of controlling it have been discussed exhaustively recently by a Canadian contractor of thirty years' experience.

Contrary to popular impression, quicksand is not a material, but a condition of a material which under different conditions may possess quite different characteristics. Any granular material may become quicksand if there is an upward movement of water through it sufficient to lift the particles and reduce friction between them. The condition of quicksand will be produced when the volume of the contained water approaches an excess of the volume of the normal voids. Coarse sand and gravel can be quicksand if the water inflow is at a high velocity, but naturally fine grained sand displays the quality of quicksand much more readily. The remedy for quicksand conditions in foundation work is to restore the ground water to its normal level. Quicksand rarely occurs in nature, and its appearance is almost always due to the ground water disturbance caused by the work, which can be minimized by more scientific methods of handling.

Fine wet sand will carry as good a load as coarse grained sands. The former has a

bad name because we usually see it in its abnormal state, since we are obliged to expose and disturb it to examine it. The chief danger in using it under foundations lies not in its natural qualities, but in the possibility of disturbance from future excavations in the neighborhood.

NEARLY all artificial gems, that is, stones which are really made by artificial means, are compounds of alum crystallized under special conditions. The metallic salts that are added during fusion determine whether the stones produced shall be sapphires, rubies or Oriental topazes, amethysts or emeralds.

Early attempts to manufacture artificial gems on a commercial basis failed because of the difficulty in obtaining the tremendous heat necessary, but the oxyhydrogen flame solved the problem, and producing artificial gems is now an important industry.

The basic material is ammonia alum, which is converted into calcined alum by heating it. To that is added the coloring matter in suitable proportions, oxide chromium for rubies, titanic acid for sapphires. The finely divided powder is permitted to trickle down into the oxyhydrogen flame, which attains a temperature of 1,800 degrees. The powder fuses into a pear shaped body that weighs from 10 carats to 200.

This Girl May Be 1921's Youngest Freshman

BETTY JANE HAMILTON, educational prodigy of New Castle, Pa., who entered Westminster College, at New Wilmington, Pa., as a freshman at the age of 13 years, is probably the youngest freshman to enroll in any college in the United States this fall.

Miss Betty Jane was graduated from the New Castle High School last spring at the age of 12 years, younger by two years than any other student who had ever been graduated from the four year course here. In graduating at the age of 12 and in entering Westminster at the age of 13 she eclipses the record made by her brother Edmund, two years ago, who was graduated from New Castle High School at 14 years and entered Westminster as a freshman in the fall of the same year.

Miss Hamilton, in addition to finishing the high school course here at such a youthful age, found time to indulge in other activities that keep her from being a "book worm." She is quite an able musician, and in addition to her studies she carries on her musical education work.

The school record that she has "hung up" has never been approached in western Pennsylvania.



Betty Jane Hamilton, 13 years old, of New Castle, Pa., who may be the youngest freshman of 1921.